

Free Swimming

Summary

This paper updates members on recent developments in the Free Swimming scheme, and asks members to take a view on the next steps for LGA lobbying.

Recommendations

That members note the report and offer a view on the next steps for LGA lobbying.

Action

Officers to reflect member steer in on-going lobbying.

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Free Swimming

Background

1. The Free Swimming Programme (FSP) has been live from April 2009. 252 councils have opted to deliver one or both of the free swimming schemes: one for young people aged 16-and-under and one for the over-60s.
2. The FSP is a voluntary scheme jointly funded by five government departments, led by DCMS, and by local funding from council tax and other sources (which accounts for around a quarter of the costs of delivery). The total cost of the FSP is £140 million over two years, including £60 million of capital funding available to participating authorities for improvements to public and school swimming pools.

Progress

3. Initial through-put data from the first and second quarters shows that there are, on average, 1.7 million “free swims” taking place a month across the country. The number of free swims rose from 4.4 million (April to June 2009) to 5.9 million (July to September 2009). This data does not take account of the “deadweight” of swimmers who would otherwise have paid to swim, or the “displacement” of swimmers and, therefore, does not translate into a measure of the scheme’s success or otherwise.
4. On 17 December, Sport England published the results of the third Active People Survey (APS), covering the period between October 2008 and October 2009. The survey shows that an additional 115,000 people got involved in sport compared to the previous year. Further details on the APS are included in the update paper at **Item 10**.
5. The APS survey includes results from April 2009 – October 2009, during which period the Free Swimming programme has operated. It is worth noting, therefore, that the largest decrease in the numbers of people participating in any one sport at least once a week was in swimming, participation in which fell by 0.26%. A list of once a week, moderate intensity participation in all 46 funded NGB sports is enclosed at **Annex A**.
6. The capital modernisation fund, administered by Sport England, has so far distributed £25 million to 59 projects in 48 local authorities in the financial year 2009-10. Project awards have ranged from £70,000 to £1.75 million. A further £25 million will be available in 2010-2011 and, to date, 170 bids have been made to this fund. Decisions on the allocation of this money are expected by the end of this financial year.

7. At its September 2009 meeting the CTS board agreed that the LGA's lobbying on the Free Swimming programme should focus on:
 - Seeking a more explicit acknowledgement by government of the council contributions to the costs of delivering free swimming;
 - Ensuring these costs are factored into the evaluation of the scheme, and;
 - Calling for a clear commitment from government to explain how the scheme will be funded beyond 2011, or whether public spending constraints will require it to be discontinued.
8. Given our lobbying on these areas, we were pleased to note Ben Bradshaw's comments, on 27 October, that "each and every local authority that is part of the scheme deserves credit for backing it, often with their own money". The question of continued funding for Free Swimming post-2011 is not expected to be resolved until the next spending review, and the LGA will continue to lobby for councils not to be left with an unfunded legacy from the scheme. With regard to point two, **officers will provide an update at the board** on progress with the evaluation of the scheme.

Next Steps

9. The LGA has publicly offered its support the Free Swimming scheme, and has noted that a high proportion of councils have stepped up to the challenge of delivering the initiative locally. As more evidence becomes available, however, it is important that councils and the LGA are clear that the future viability of the scheme will require it to deliver an increase in swimming participation, and to represent excellent value for money in comparison to other interventions.
10. Following officers' update on the evaluation, members are asked to provide a steer as to how Free Swimming is progressing in their local area, and where the LGA should focus its lobbying over the coming months.

Financial Implications

11. None arising from this report. The evaluation of the scheme though will impact directly on its future funding post-2011.

Implications for Wales

12. The FSP applies only in England. The Welsh free swimming scheme is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

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Annex A

Sports Participation: at least once a week for 30 minutes, moderate intensity

1 x 30 sport indicator	APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008)		APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009)		Change from APS2		
	%	n	%	n	% point	n	Statistical significance
Sport England NGB 09-13 Funded sports							
Angling	***	***	0.14%	56,700	n/a	n/a	***
Athletics	3.89%	1,612,100	4.16%	1,739,700	0.27%	127,600	Increase
Badminton	1.29%	535,700	1.29%	539,400	0.00%	3,700	No Change
Baseball & Softball	0.02%	6,700	*	*	n/a	n/a	n/a
Basketball	0.45%	186,000	0.46%	193,100	0.01%	7,100	No Change
Bowls****	0.65%	274,100	0.58%	249,800	-0.06%	-24,300	Decrease
Boxing	0.26%	106,800	0.29%	121,400	0.03%	14,600	No Change
Canoeing and kayaking	0.10%	43,500	0.15%	62,900	0.05%	19,400	Increase
Cricket	0.49%	204,800	0.49%	206,600	0.00%	1,800	No Change
Cycling	4.26%	1,767,100	4.50%	1,880,000	0.24%	112,900	Increase
Equestrian	0.82%	341,700	0.82%	341,500	-0.01%	-200	No Change
Fencing	0.04%	15,000	0.03%	12,200	-0.01%	-2,800	No Change
Football	5.18%	2,144,700	5.08%	2,122,700	-0.09%	-22,000	No Change
Golf	2.29%	948,300	2.15%	897,600	-0.14%	-50,700	Decrease
Gymnastics and trampolining	0.22%	89,200	0.12%	48,300	-0.10%	-40,900	Decrease
Hockey	0.24%	99,800	0.23%	95,700	-0.01%	-4,100	No Change
Judo	0.05%	18,700	0.04%	15,100	-0.01%	-3,600	No Change
Mountaineering	0.21%	86,100	0.20%	83,900	-0.01%	-2,200	No Change
Movement & Dance	0.36%	149,300	0.22%	90,200	-0.14%	-59,100	Decrease
Netball	0.29%	118,800	0.32%	133,500	0.03%	14,700	No Change
Rounders	0.06%	25,900	0.04%	18,000	-0.02%	-7,900	Decrease
Rowing	0.13%	54,900	0.12%	49,000	-0.02%	-5,900	No Change
Rugby League	0.21%	88,300	0.15%	63,000	-0.06%	-25,300	Decrease
Rugby Union	0.56%	230,300	0.50%	207,500	-0.06%	-22,800	Decrease
Sailing	0.22%	89,900	0.20%	83,000	-0.02%	-6,900	No Change
Snowsport	0.29%	120,600	0.26%	106,800	-0.04%	-13,800	Decrease
Squash	0.71%	293,900	0.72%	299,500	0.01%	5,600	No Change
Swimming	7.83%	3,244,300	7.57%	3,162,400	-0.26%	-81,900	Decrease
Table Tennis	0.18%	75,600	0.20%	85,500	0.02%	9,900	No Change
Taekwondo	0.06%	24,200	0.06%	27,000	0.01%	2,800	No Change
Tennis	1.18%	487,500	1.27%	530,200	0.09%	42,700	Increase
Volleyball	0.12%	48,400	0.09%	39,200	-0.02%	-9,200	Decrease
Weightlifting	0.29%	118,400	0.28%	116,000	-0.01%	-2,400	No Change
Archery*							
Boccia*							
Goalball*							
Handball*							
Lacrosse*							
Modern Pentathlon*							
Orienteering*							
Shooting**							
Triathlon*							
Waterskiing*							
Wheelchair Basketball*							
Wheelchair Rugby*							
Wrestling*							

*Insufficient sample size for once a week participation result

** Light intensity only sports

*** Figures for moderate intensity angling are not available for Active People Surveys 1 & 2

**** The figure for bowls refers to participants aged over 65 participating for at least 30 minutes at any intensity